



## **IN-PERSON TRAINING COURSE PREPARATION DOCUMENT**

This document encloses the concept and agenda for the four-day storytelling training course in English, which took place in Alden Biesen in April 2024. The course involved 16 young storytellers, five festival organisers, and six mentors/trainers. Here, you can find course objectives, a programme, expected results, and example workshop plans.

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## Project Overview

The Cassandra Project has dual aims: first, it will support young storytellers (YS) aged 18 - 30 to become 'socially engaged performers' ready for international stages. Five European countries will be part of the project: Poland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Norway.

Secondly, the project will help international storytelling festivals to improve their relevance, reach new audiences, champion art for social good and build platforms for the next generation of tellers.

Based on the techniques and approaches used in The Cassandra Project, a public training resource will be created for anyone who wishes to expand and support the impact of youth storytelling and socially engaged storytelling.

## What is socially engaged storytelling?

Socially engaged storytelling is telling stories that matter personally to the teller on topics that matter on a global level; it's telling stories that address and promote awareness of social issues and encourage conversation and positive change. It goes beyond entertainment, aiming to inspire action and create a more inclusive and just society.

## Who is involved?

As the lead partner, the Federation for European Storytelling will manage and administrate the project. They are joined by five international storytelling organisations that host annual international festivals: Alden Biesen, Belgium (BE), Storytelling Network of Kronoberg, Sweden (SE), Storytelling Centre Netherlands (NL), Stiftelsen Fortellersentrum Norway (NO) and Stowarzyszenie, Grupa Studnia O. Poland (PL)

## Trainers and mentors

Each festival partner brings a mentor to the project and selects 3 young storytellers (YS).

The mentors are professional storytellers. They contribute to the masterclass programme as trainers, according to their own specific expertise and they accompany the YS in their engagement and creative process in their home country. The monthly international online meetings/workshops will be led by Shona Cowie (FEST).

The course programme was conceived by the project partners and the mentors, taking into account their specific expertise, as there is:

Lina (NO): working with values as an artist.

Jakob (SE): storytelling and intangible heritage, finding meaning in folk tales.

Adam (PL): outdoor storytelling, ecology and sustainability in storytelling

Rory (NL): stage presence and voice

Arjen (NL): community engagement and storytelling

Tom (BE): bilingual storytelling, community engagement

Shona (FEST): stage space, body and chorus

## Young storytellers

This masterclass is a blended course with two international residential sessions (Alden Biesen and Amsterdam), a social engagement and creative story development phase at country level and a series of international online meetings and workshops.

The training course outlined in this document took place in week 16 of the project, launching the activities which will follow throughout 2024/25.

The course is aimed at capacity building and creating a network of the next generation of storytellers. It will be an immersive training program held at Alden Biesen Castle in Belgium and aims to equip young storytellers with the artistic, ethical, and collaborative skills necessary to create the powerful, socially engaged performances which they will be delivering in future phases of the Cassandra project.

Through masterclasses, mentorship and peer-to-peer learning, participants will refine their storytelling techniques, learn about intangible heritage, explore methods for adapting traditional styles to address contemporary issues, and develop impactful personal narratives. Beyond honing their craft, they will also gain an understanding about the nuances, responsibilities and approaches to socially engaged storytelling.

They will also have the opportunity to learn from the world class storytellers who are participating in the Alden Beisen International Storytelling Festival, which will be occurring in tandem to the training course. The Young storytellers will see the work of the professional storytellers and have a chance to interview them in question-and-answer workshops, as well as less formally networking with them during meal and social times.

The young storytellers were selected by each festival partner. The procedure to do this was discussed during an online meeting but, since the situation regarding storytelling and storytellers differs in each country, each partner used its own recruiting and selection procedure.

## International Festivals

Simultaneously, the training will provide a space for the projects 5 international festival partners to collectively develop strategies to improve relevance, increase audience reach and provide platforms which are appropriate for young and diverse artists.



## Course Objectives

### Young Storytellers

#### 1. Artistic Development:

- Participants will refine storytelling techniques, including voice, movement, and dramaturgy.
- Participants will explore methods for adapting traditional storytelling styles to address contemporary social issues.
- Participants will gain confidence in their ability to authentically embody and convey impactful personal narratives.
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- Participants will see world-class storytelling performances and network with established professional storytellers.

#### 2. Approaches to Socially Engaged Storytelling:

- Participants will develop a nuanced understanding of the role of storytelling in promoting social awareness and change.
- Participants will learn ethical frameworks for collecting and representing stories from communities.

### 3. Network Building

- Foster valuable connections and creative collaborations among the diverse cohort of young international storytellers, building lasting friendships and a peer network to support their artistic and social impact goals.

### International Festivals

#### 4. Collaborative Festival Programming:

- Festival organisers will share best practices for integrating socially engaged storytelling into their event programming.
- Participants will brainstorm ways to co-create new festival experiences that amplified diverse youth voices and encourage audience engagement.
- Partnerships will strengthen between the young storytellers and festival hosts to sustain ongoing collaboration and legacy.

## Course Programme

### Example Masterclass Plans

#### Form, Space and Audience Involvement

LED BY: Lina Teir

REQUIRED MATERIALS: Projector for laptop (Mac), Powerpoint

EXERCISE	DESCRIPTION	TIME
Meeting the space	When the participants come to the room Lina has prepared it 'in some way' or the workshop is taking place / starting outdoors, in the basement or another place.	5 min
Esthetic response	The participants discuss their experience of meeting the space, what the space communicates and what reflections and associations they get from it. They make a physical form as a response. We look at them.  Lina talks about form, site-specific storytelling and audience involvement and shows examples from storytelling projects and performances.	10 min

<p>Examples and images</p> <p>Stand on a line</p>	<p>The participants move along an imaginary line on the floor, depending on where they stand in relation to “opposites” such as:</p> <p><i>Tradition – Experiment, Intimacy – Distance, Verbal text – Total communication</i>  <i>Open – Closed dramaturgy, Passive – Active audience</i></p>	<p>15 min</p> <p>10 min</p>
<p>Finding scenery and space</p>	<p>(This exercise is depending on the participants having started their process with their own projects – we will find that out during the first days)</p> <p>The participants work in their “national groups”.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. They choose the topic / material / story / question of one of the storytellers.</li> <li>2. They discuss what kind of relation to the audience that could be natural for the project and what kind of space they imagine.</li> <li>3. They go around the building (indoors and outdoors) alone “hunting” for inspiring, meaningful stages that they take photos of with their phones- for 10 min.</li> <li>4. They meet again and show each other their favourites and discuss how the story could be played out there and in what way that would engage and provoke the audience.</li> <li>5. They decide on one of the places and guide all the other groups there, tell shortly about what they vision there and how it relates to the theme of the performance.</li> </ol>	<p>30 min</p>
<p>Deconstructing Little Red Riding hood</p>	<p>(This exercise is the alternative – just described very shortly for now)</p> <p>The participants work in their “national groups”.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We tell the story of “Little Red Riding Hood” together</li> <li>2. Individual image hunt</li> <li>3. Discussion in groups, finding a stage, deciding for a role for the audience</li> <li>4. Choosing a) the start b) the most intense scene c) the ending from the story (3 min)</li> <li>5. Rehearsing</li> <li>6. Showing it to each other</li> <li>7. Fantasizing of each-others performances through storytelling</li> </ol>	<p>Alt. 30 min</p>
<p>New stages</p> <p>Summary in a circle</p>	<p>The five groups guide the other groups to the stages they have found.</p> <p>We throw around the imaginary globe. Everyone that gets it can say something about a new thought that they have in the end of the workshop, something they take with them or something they are curious about now.</p> <p>Afterwards everyone can write their thoughts in their notebook.</p>	<p>10 min</p> <p>10 min</p>

## Multilingual Storytelling for an International Audience

LED BY: Tom Van Mieghem

SESSION OVERVIEW: During this workshop, we experience the connection between storyteller-story-audience. We make connections to the emotions in the story, and we find out how they come out through our different languages: words, sounds and body language.

SESSION AIMS: to discover that the way we tell the story is at least as important as the words in a certain language. To

discover that the real expression of emotions is our common language.

REQUIRED MATERIALS: a chair for everyone

EXERCISE	DESCRIPTION	PURPOSE/DESIRED OUTCOME	TIME
Different greetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Walk through the space, when you meet someone, greet him/her in your own language.</li> <li>- Same with a non-existing word</li> <li>- In different emotions</li> </ul>	To feel at ease, using non existing words, in connection to an emotion	5
Introductory Exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Think of something you have experienced In your own life, the last week/weeks/ month .. something with a sequence of at least 3 emotions (can be big but also small) only condition is that you don't mind to share this, later in the exercise</li> <li>- Walk again criss-cross the space and tell this little story out loud for your self...In gabbertalk As if you are alone in the space. No one is there to see you, no one can hear you.</li> <li>- Important is to say not to play theatre, just tell. If your body goes with you in the story (arms, legs, belly, voice, ..), don't try to stop that. Just let it go, let the story lead you. But don't try to do this consciously.</li> </ul>	<p>Make connection to the story and the emotions,</p> <p>Walking across can help to be in the emotion, not in the head.</p> <p>Also the use of gabbertalk helps not to make logic sequences of words</p>	10
Main Exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reflection: on a scale 0-10: for yourself: how much was the connection to the sequence of emotions present in the way you were telling the story?</li> <li>- Same exercise: the story, crisscross the space, gabbertalk. We will upscale, depending on the ratings, we go a level higher</li> </ul>	To be able to tell the story in a way beyond the limits of 'words-language'	30

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In about 3 times, all participants try to reach 10.</li> <li>- We go higher than 10 we exaggerate and go way beyond, we go till 25 on a scale of 10</li> <li>- We do the exercise again lowering to 8, but feeling what you felt when you were telling on 25, keeping the essence in your way of telling</li> <li>- We go lower to 2 on a scale of 10</li> <li>- If we have the time, we try 0 and see what happens</li>   <li>- Reflection: telling stories 'big' or 'small'. Good to discover which kind of storyteller you are, what is your main way of telling. Good to know that the other way of telling exists. If you tell 'big' in general and at a certain moment you do something small. It becomes very important in the story</li>   <li>- In pairs: we tell the story to an audience of 1 person, in gabbertalk, the way (scale) we feel comfortable</li>   <li>- Some tell their story to the whole audience (different scales, directed by me) in gabbertalk. Audience tries to translate</li> </ul>	<p>Finding a way to share the connection, emotions of the story with the audience, no matter if you speak the same language.</p> <p>Getting to know ourselves as a storyteller: who am I, how do I usually tell my story and to realize which other possibilities there are to use?</p>	<p>5</p> <p>10</p> <p>20</p>
Reflection/closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reflection question: write on a paper: the average percentage of how much of the 'essence' of the stories did we understand only by telling in jabbertalk? No discussion about the term 'essence': everyone decides for their self what the essence is.</li> <li>- For the persons who told their story: how much of the essence of my story was understood.</li> <li>- Discussion about the outcome; usually we come to the conclusion that at least half of the essence of the story is understood, without using a word. We make conclusions for international, but also non-international storytelling: why worrying about the words, when more then the half of our story can be understood without using one word. Realizing the importance of the nonverbal aspect of storytelling especially in an international context.</li> </ul>	<p>Realizing the importance of the nonverbal aspect of storytelling especially in an international context.</p>	<p>10</p>

## Finding your meaning in Folktales. - Intangible Cultural Heritage

LED BY: Jakob Elofsson

SESSION OVERVIEW: A workshop and presentation on intangible cultural heritage where we modify existing fairy tales to make them have different meanings.

SESSION AIMS: To be able to both preserve an intangible cultural heritage and find new ways of connecting the storytellers other reasons to tell them.

REQUIRED MATERIALS: Pen and paper, (If your storytellers are beginners and don't possess a repertoire of stories: Printouts of short traditional fairy tales for everyone, 3-5 different stories)

REFERENCES: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>

EXERCISE	DESCRIPTION	PURPOSE/DESIRED OUTCOME	TIME
Warm-ups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greet the participants. Tell them that we are going to talk about Folktales and Intangible Cultural Heritage, but we are also going to be improvising quite a lot so let's warm up first.</li> <li>Warm-up exercise: The Expert               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participants are split into groups of three or four.</li> <li>One is declared the 'expert' of a certain topic. This topic is decided by the other participants, such as: Rocket Science, Mesopotamian History, Childcare and so on. It doesn't matter if the expert doesn't know anything about this.</li> <li>The expert should then talk for 90 seconds about the subject. However, the other participants can always interrupt the expert by saying 'No'. If this happens the expert must change what they just said.</li> <li>When the 90 seconds are over, the next expert is chosen.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	Small warm up with focus on improvisation so that the participants will be ready to improvise during the later exercises.	10-15 min
Lead in/ introductory Exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Discussion) Why do you tell stories? Think first for yourself, then discuss with your neighbor, then we have a group discussion.</li> <li>Tell the participants that one consequence of telling stories, fairy tales and legends is that we are preserving an intangible cultural heritage.</li> <li>Tell the participants the session overview and aims.</li> </ul>	This is so participants will think about why storytelling is important to them. Is it an expression of their creativity, preserving of an	20 min

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk about intangible cultural heritage and what it is. (Methods, knowledge, skills, traditions that lives and transfer between people. Rituals on holidays, craft-, food-, or work traditions, songs and games, fairytales, and legends.</li> <li>• (Exercise) So, let's practice this: Tell your favorite fairytale you know to another participant. Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel. Summarize, take 3-4 minutes to tell it so you remember it. (Alternatively, have 3-5 stories ready that they can quickly read and then tell each other, but then skip the warmup)</li> <li>• We can preserve stories for the story's sake. But sometimes it's hard to find a connection to a story. Sometimes it might not align with the reason why we tell stories. You should like the story you're telling, otherwise it will fall flat.</li> </ul>	<p>artform, to improve as a speaker, to share their ideas and thoughts with an audience.</p> <p>Also to let the participants think about what stories we tell and what they say.</p> <p>The fairy tale they should tell will be the foundation for the rest of the workshop. Why they only should summarize it is because it should still be moldable into different forms.</p>	
Main Exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Discussion) Together with your partner, analyze your stories, find the "messages" in them. What the story wants to say. Discuss this together. Try to find a few different things the story wants to say.</li> <li>• (Exercise) Retell the story with another partner and focus on one of the messages you discussed previously; how does it change the story?</li> <li>• Now think about your characters in the story. A story will often make the main character most sympathetic. Discuss the different characters in your stories and find someone who has a different perspective than the main character.</li> <li>• (Exercise) Tell the story from that character's perspective to another person in the group.</li> <li>• (Discussion) Did the message of the story change?</li> <li>• Find one scene in the story and focus on one of the characters feelings in that moment.</li> <li>• Any volunteers can tell it for the rest of the participants.</li> </ul>	<p>This is for the participants to find a reason to tell the story, a message they could convey.</p> <p>When they tell the story with the focus on a message the story should change a little bit. Is this way the same story can be molded into something we care about.</p> <p>The change in perspective can also change the emotional center of the story. A story with values or messages we don't agree with can become a protest</p>	40 min

		those values if we use a different point of view character.	
Reflection/ closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Discussion) When can/should we use this technique?</li> <li>• (Discussion) What is the dangers of using it?</li> <li>• (Discussion) Is this preserving an Intangible Cultural Heritage or is it changing it? Where do we draw the line?</li> </ul>	<p>These questions are for the participants to think about both the responsibility you have when you're adapting existing material and how it's part of traditional tales to change.</p> <p>At the end of the workshop the desired outcome is that the participants have gotten a few different ways of processing traditional tales as well as an understanding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and its importance.</p>	15 min

**FACILITATORS NOTE:**

If you are up on a stage performing, you should know why you're up there. There might be many reasons for why you as an artist perform, but one of the consequences of storytelling is that you are preserving an art form that has been with us for as long as humans had a language. One of the responsibilities we have when we're doing that is the importance of empathy, being able to see another perspective. This is both for making the story or characters deeper, but also to better relate to the audience.

This is so participants will think about why storytelling is important to them. Is it an expression of their creativity, preserving of an artform, to improve as a speaker, to share their ideas and thoughts with an audience.

## Engagement - Researching Your Story In The Community

In addition to structured workshops, we planned to open a space for facilitated discussions, particularly concerning the more sensitive aspects of engaging with communities in the research phase and representing other people's stories on stage. We would offer case studies to help support the discussion, and the expert mentors would offer their insights, but this would predominantly be a space where the young storytellers could learn from each other.

Discussion topics include:

- Positioning yourself in talking to a group
- Knowing yourself and your issues and relation to this group
- Ethics about what to do with the stories that come out of a group
- The effects on a group and yourself of telling someone else's stories
- Making a CASSANDRA chart of ethics
- How to collect/find stories
  - How to get in touch with a group
  - Technical aspect: how to record/remember stories and the ethics involved (Arjen shared the video)
  - How to search for stories to tell
    - § Gathering/telling personal stories of community members
    - § Gathering existing stories(old or new) in this group
    - § Searching for a theme/ a need in the group and searching for existing stories that can be metaphoric for this theme/need
    - § A combination of these possibilities

### Engagement Case study

#### 1. Tulsi - Tom Van Mieghem, Mentor BE

"Together with a musician/visual creating artist, I made a storytelling project about adoption. The project was called 'Tulsi.'

Tulsi is the name of a woman born in India and adopted as a baby, raised by Belgian parents. She is a friend of mine. One day, she was talking about the meaning of her name and the stories behind it (Tulsi is the name of a precious plant that almost every woman has in the garden and takes care of. It is rarely given as a name for a child)

With her permission, we would do this project. We talked for hours and hours. I spoke with her Belgian parents, her husband, and her children. We talked about life, good things, obstacles, the search for roots, going to India, and the impact on her life and that of her husband, parents, and children. I learned about Indian stories, about Tulsi, and other traditional stories.

Tulsi was very enthusiastic about working with me on this. We created the project metaphorically; the personal and traditional stories fit well together like a giant puzzle.

Then, we did a tryout for an audience of about 60 people. Tulsi and her family were there. Beforehand I had talked to her about the show's content. I thought ethically, everything was okay.

Nevertheless, they needed help to watch the show. Although I thought it was brought in a 'light' way, highlighting the positive things, the struggles and negative emotions captured the attention of Tulsi and her family. After the show, her parents were kind of 'shocked' and had their doubts, ... did we do the right thing choosing for the adoption? Tulsi herself was confused, and in the end, I was too.

In the weeks after, we talked about it: it seemed that Tulsi had other expectations about the show, that it would not be so close to her own story. These conversations give me the insight to make the whole show much more metaphoric, keeping in the struggles.

Although all this came to a good end, it would have been good to think about some ethical issues beforehand:

- Should we have talked more beforehand about what to tell and what not?
- And about how to tell it?
- Can I bring this story without sharing the whole text beforehand and discussing it?
- Is it okay to use the actual name (Tulsi here)? Here: beforehand, she was ok with it, but it makes it more challenging to take distance
- And ... why did I want to make this project? What was my motivation and need?"

